

As a pediatrician and a toxicologist, a card-carrying member of the untrustworthy and despicable mainstream, I find it easy to poke holes in the diagnosis. The boys were diagnosed with the use of hair analysis, which is controversial because it is unreliable. Penicillamine urine chelation challenge testing is unheard of. Ethylenediaminetetraacetic acid (EDTA) is the agent for which normative data exist. The large number of abnormalities found in the boys' trace-mineral and heavy-metal analysis makes its reliability questionable. Because the pharmacokinetics of lead are best described as snail-like, with a half-life measured in weeks or months, it is difficult to attribute the boys' marked and immediate improvement to chelation therapy. Finally, if the twins acquired their severe symptoms from exposure to heavy metals during home renovation, why was their sister unaffected?

Turning Lead into Gold is written in a colloquial style, heavily spiced with vernacular, such as "Cadmium is one bad ass supertoxic heavy metal," "These little guys would have been toast," and "bureaucratic crap." The chief shortcoming is Hallaway's resolute conviction that lead is the villain. She cites authorities selectively. The US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) are extensively quoted; however, the CDC's standard for diagnosis of lead toxicity is a blood test and not a hair test. Hallaway makes many unsupported statements. (There is a reference list at the end of the book but no citations or footnotes in the text).

This book belongs on that shelf that I discovered at the library. All of us should read one of these books, but only one. The experience provides insight.

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NATURAL WOMEN'S HEALTH: A GUIDE TO HEALTHY LIVING FOR WOMEN OF ANY AGE

Lynda Wharton. 270 pp. Illust. New Harbinger Publications, Inc., Oakland, Calif. 1995. \$20.50. ISBN 1-57224-007-5

Overall rating: Fair

Strengths: Contains fascinating herbal and homeopathic remedies; provides motivation to change unhealthy behaviours; and recognizes role of medical treatment for some problems

Weaknesses: Some inaccuracies, tendency to overstate conclusions and to quote medical information out of context

Audience: Health care professionals and educated patients interested in a complementary-medicine approach to women's reproductive and biological health

Lynda Wharton, a New Zealand naturopath and acupuncturist, is the author of this compact, soft-cover book, which would appeal to a well-educated woman seeking a complementary-medicine approach to this topic. It may also appeal to her physician. Wharton covers several of reproductive-health issues affecting women, as well as more general topics such as exercise, nutrition and stress. However, Wharton does not include social, emotional and spiritual aspects of women's lives, which are included in some more comprehensive definitions of women's health. Even if these topics were beyond the scope of Wharton's small book, she could have addressed their importance as essential components of women's health.

I have categorized the positive aspects of Wharton's book as useful, fascinating or motivating, and the negative aspects as irritating or "bosh."

Useful: Wharton includes content that is up to date, relevant and interesting. She covers areas such as periconceptional folic-acid supplementation, ambulation during labour and the benefits of breast milk for feeding infants. **Fascinating:** The material on herbal and homeopathic reme-

dies is an education for both lay and professional readers. Wharton's writing style is excellent for most patients with good literacy skills. She writes clear descriptions of reproductive anatomy and physiology. **Motivating:** Wharton has a convincing ability to exhort readers to choose a healthier lifestyle (e.g., eat less fat and get more exercise), in a manner that is friendly and nonconfrontational.

Irritating: What irritated me most was Wharton's tendency to precede a strong opinion about a medical issue with a statement such as "studies show" or offer an expert's name and a description of his or her research, but no reference. This book may not be aimed at physicians, but many patients today do not accept health information uncritically either. One of the best aspects of the women's health movement is that consumers now look very carefully at what "experts" say and "studies" show. I would have liked more attention to references and greater clarity about which aspects of her book are derived from clinical opinion and which have a scientific basis. This would have been especially helpful for areas of complementary medicine that have been scientifically researched, such as the use of acupuncture to treat hyperemesis gravidarum. **"Bosh:"** Some of the "bosh" I encountered included inaccurate figures (e.g., Wharton gives the incidence of neural tube defects as 5 in 100 pregnancies) and poor advice (e.g., women under 18 should not consider taking the oral contraceptive pill). Generally, however, Wharton's advice is safe, and she often recommends that women seek a medical opinion before starting or while using complementary remedies.

I plan to lend this book to colleagues and patients who are interested in pursuing a more healthy lifestyle or in a complementary-medicine approach to women's

health problems. I look forward to reading Wharton's next edition.

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MENTAL HEALTH LAW AND PRACTICE

Julio Arboleda-Flórez and Margaret Copithorne. Illust.
Carswell, Scarborough, Ont. 1995. \$135. ISBN 9547062-
855

Overall rating: Excellent
Strengths: Clarity, rich references and discussion
Weaknesses: Omits Quebec; future usefulness will depend on speed and quality of updates
Audience: Lawyers, and practitioners and administrators working in mental health facilities

This looseleaf book, subtitled "a Guide to the Alberta Mental Health Act and Related Canadian Legislation," is of considerably wider national interest than its subtitle suggests. Updates, to be published twice yearly at an estimated annual cost of \$75, will reflect Canada-wide developments in law in this area. Dr. Julio Arboleda-Flórez is head of the Forensic Division, Faculty of Medicine, University of Calgary, and Ms. Margaret Copithorne is legal consultant to the Forensic Division, Department of Psychiatry, Calgary General Hospital. Arboleda-Flórez is a well-respected commentator on legal aspects of mental health care and on the significance of mental status to criminal law and procedure.

The text is organized thematically, and individual topics are easy to find through the comprehensive table of contents and an ample index. Chapter 1 concerns the apprehension, detention and discharge of voluntary and involuntary patients,

including those held under criminal law. Legal and clinical definitions of emergency detention and treatment are contrasted, relevant statutes reviewed and different concepts of "dangerousness" explained. Chapter 2 considers patients' rights and remedies under common law, legislation and the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Citations of Canadian judgments make this chapter a valuable reference source.

Chapter 3 deals with the powers and duties of staff in mental health facilities, including detention without treatment. Chapter 4 considers confidentiality and disclosure of records, with particular reference to the Supreme Court of Canada's 1992 decision in *McInerney v. MacDonald* on fiduciary duties and disclosure to patients. Chapter 5 covers capacity, treatment and control, including the specific types of competencies that mental health professionals assess and the times when assessment is appropriate (other than when it is mandated by a judge or legislation). This chapter discusses informed consent to treatment and informed refusal in a helpful manner. The concluding chapter deals with review panels, including their legal characteristics, roles and duties. The cases concerning the legality of the procedures of such panels include a review of the principles of administrative law and of the production and admissibility of evidence. Appendices include a lawyer's primer on common drugs used in psychiatry as well as sample forms and letters.

This book will be of immense service to lawyers and mental health professionals who seek to understand the legal context and content of their practice. It will be of particular value to mental health professionals in urgent situations, who need to know quickly how the law addresses specific topics of concern. Hospitals and other facilities that care for patients with mental disor-

ders, even occasionally, should consider subscribing to this text and its updates. Frequent references to the relevant scholarly literature in Canada, England and the United States make it a valuable academic resource as well.

The book gives helpful explanations of selected Canadian and English cases, but there is no reference to the Quebec Civil Code or cases. However, legal and mental health practitioners elsewhere in Canada have good reason to welcome this book and the authors' commitment to keep it contemporary by issuing updates. No one should be deterred by the implication in the subtitle that the publication applies only to Alberta. With skill and insight, the authors present mental health law relevant to all areas of Canada where common law is used.

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MAKING THE PATIENT YOUR PARTNER: COMMUNICATION SKILLS FOR DOCTORS AND OTHER CAREGIVERS

Thomas Gordon and W. Sterling Edwards. 213 pp. Illust.
Auburn House, Westport, Conn. 1995. \$49.95 (US). ISBN
0-86569-255-6

Overall rating: Fair
Strengths: Summarizes most of the recent information on effective communication with patients
Weaknesses: Much of the information is aimed at a general audience
Audience: Health care professionals who deal directly with patients and others who care for the ill, including family and friends

This book is coauthored by unlikely collaborators, which piqued my curiosity. Thomas Gordon is a well-known psychologist